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CIA RECORDS MANAGEMENT BOARD

20 December 1968

GUIDANCE ON HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS, LEGAL RECORDS, AND THE RECORDS PURGE

BACKGROUND

All components of the Agency have been directed to review and reduce the volume of records they now have in the Agency Records Center. Although responsible officers are urged to dispose of the useless, obsolete, and duplicate papers, they are cautioned to retain the records required by law to document the Agency's activities and essential to the preparation of histories.

GUIDELINES

The attached Checklist prepared by the Historical Staff is distributed to help identify various types of documents needed in the preparation of histories. To clarify the procedures for history writers, the Historical Staff in January 1967 issued some guidance in a "Handbook for the Writing of Histories." A year earlier other history guidance was issued in [redacted]

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[redacted] Recently the Historical Program was described in an article in the Support Bulletin (Sept. '68, P.17). The explanation in the lead paragraph should give additional meaning to the attached Checklist. The article stated:

...it was decided that all major components should have their own historical programs...to place in true perspective the records of the component's operations, activities, procedures, successes and failures; plus the concepts leading to the formation of its various elements, policy decisions laid down for their guidance, and the authorities and agreements under which they have conducted their activities.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

Some Offices have established working files of papers needed in the writing of histories. These may be temporary files to be kept only until the writing project is completed, after which records are returned to the official files from which they are borrowed and non-record material destroyed. But, primary source material, certain other significant documents referenced in the histories, or those which substantiate portions of the written histories--wherever filed--should be carefully identified and preserved. Such important documents should be specifically referenced and retained with the Agency's permanent records. Whenever possible, original primary source documents, rather than copies, should be so preserved. Care must be exercised that such documents are not left in temporary Office files that are scheduled to be kept a limited time and then destroyed.

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

LEGAL RECORDS

Finally, there are records (many of which are historical) that must be retained permanently pursuant to Public Law 81-754 which states, in part:

Section 506: The head of each Federal agency shall cause to be made and preserved records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the agency and designed to furnish the information necessary to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of persons directly affected by the agency's activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMPONENTS

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The above requirement has been delegated to each Directorate in [redacted] Records Management is a command responsibility. Plans for the retention of historical documents and records required by law should be included in the Office "Records Control Schedule." Most Agency components already have approved Records Schedules in which the Office head has specified the files to be retained and destroyed, in accordance with the Government's General Schedule and disposal authority. The current Records Purge is being conducted in accordance with existing or amended Schedules. (At present National Archives estimates that, government-wide, 15% or less of the records in storage should be in the permanent category; all the rest are temporary and have limited retention periods.)

RECORDS DISPOSAL AND SCHEDULE CHANGES

Requests for changes in the scheduled records retention periods may be developed by responsible Officers. Such changes should be coordinated with the Office and Directorate Records Management Officers. All Schedules are reviewed by the Agency Records Administration Officer for approval in accordance with legal requirements established by Congress.

PERMANENT RECORDS "RETENTION PLANS"

Each Directorate should aim to eliminate unnecessary or duplicate files. Specific Offices should be responsible for those records necessary and required to provide the "adequate documentation" called for in PL 81-754.

The Senior Records Management Officer in each Directorate should develop and publish a "Records Retention Plan" which itemizes all the files of permanent records and assigns a responsible "Office of Record" for each such file in the Directorate. Management support of this action will foster the development of an authoritative mechanism to facilitate the purge of unnecessary papers and at the same time to preserve the records of enduring value.

Attachment: Checklist.

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HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS: A Checklist

The following types of documents (or records in any other form) should be exempted from record purges except as individual documents are duplicated and accessible in other holdings.

Policies

Documents showing the development of policy, including planning stages, draft plans, deliberations, agreements and dissents, decision, and follow-up.
All other policy papers.

Organization

Establishment and termination of components.
Tables of Organization, and changes thereof.
Organizational charts.
Key assignments of personnel.
Office evolution reports.

Responsibilities

Legislation--proposed, effected, or repealed.
Statements of function.
Lists of objectives or priorities.
Command decisions; action directives.
Statements of operational requirements.
Standing instructions.
Operational programs.
Mission directives.

Agreements

Coordinated plans, effected or aborted.
Interagency agreements and records of dissent.
Liaison protocols.

Progress Reports

Annual and other periodic activity reports and program evaluations, including supporting documents, significantly revised drafts, sanitized versions, and follow-up or updating papers.
One-time post-mortems, validity studies, after-action investigations, administrative post-audits, inspection reports, and other surveys, including supporting documents and follow-up.

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Miscellaneous Compilations

Briefings for key officials.
Operational highlights.
Orientation books.
Background summaries.
Case histories.
Office chronologies.
After-action debriefings.

Indexes

Obsolete indexes, classification and other lists, directories, and other indicator or locator systems and finding aids applicable to discontinued records.
Chrono files of senior officers, useful as chronological indexes to other files.

"Obsolete" Materials: Recap

Obsolete and re-written historical studies, progress reports, and program evaluations.
Completed or cancelled investigations and inspections.
Liquidated components and stations.
Discontinued units, projects, programs, and functions.
Missions accomplished, and missions defeated or scratched.
Cancelled or deferred objectives.
Accomplished, defeated, repealed, and amended legislation.
Rescinded or countermanded directives.
Superseded or repealed priorities.
Revised and replaced methodologies.
Terminated, retired, or dormant sources and liaison systems.
Rejected or withdrawn plans, options, and alternate courses of action.
Discarded or aborted targets.
Cancelled policy agenda.
Outmoded material and techniques.
Obsolescent or aborted innovations.
Abandoned indexes or locator systems.